

Viral Meningitis

Viral meningitis is a relatively common but rarely serious form of meningitis. It is characterized by sudden onset of febrile illness with headache, stiff neck, sleepiness and irritability. A wide variety of infectious agents are known to cause viral meningitis. In the USA, enteroviruses cause most of the known cases.

Enteroviruses also cause a variety of illnesses, common in young children, which occur during the summer and fall months. These viruses often cause mild infections such as colds, sore throats, diarrhea, and vomiting. Less often they cause pneumonia, meningitis, encephalitis and may affect the eye or heart.

CAUSE: Coxsackieviruses, echoviruses, or enteroviruses.

SYMPTOMS: Fever, cold-like symptoms, sore throat, mouth sores, rash, vomiting, and diarrhea, are most common. Some people may not have any symptoms. Some people develop symptoms of meningitis such as headache, stiff neck, sleepiness and irritability.

TRANSMISSION: Some viruses leave the body through the stool of an infected person and enter another person when hands, food or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool, are placed in the mouth. Also, viruses can be spread through droplets that are expelled from the nose and mouth during sneezing and coughing.

INCUBATION: It usually takes from 3 to 6 days from the time a person is exposed until symptoms begin.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD: During illness and for several weeks after illness through contact with stool and a week or less through droplets from the nose or mouth. Infected persons who may not seem sick are able to spread infection.



No exclusion is necessary for mild, cold like symptoms, unless the child is unable to participate in normal daily activities. Persons with viral meningitis may return when their physician decides they may participate with normal daily activities. Children with uncontained diarrhea should be excluded.

Prevention & Control

1. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds after using the bathroom, wiping the nose or mouth, and after handling diapers or anything soiled with stool. If hand sanitizers are used, they may be used only after thorough hand washing.
2. Clean and disinfect contaminated areas (diapering area, toilets, potty chairs) and sanitize toys at least daily and when soiled.



1. Bleach Disinfectant

- ¼ cup bleach in a gallon of water
 - 1 tablespoon bleach in a quart of water
- PREPARE FRESH SOLUTION DAILY.*

OR

2. Commercial disinfectant that is EPA approved

FOLLOW MANUFACTURER'S DIRECTIONS.



1. Bleach Sanitizer (Use non-scented)

- 1 teaspoon bleach in 1 gallon water
 - ¼ teaspoon bleach in 1 quart water
- USE TEST STRIP TO CHECK CONCENTRATION.*
DO NOT RINSE, LET AIR DRY.
PREPARE FRESH SOLUTION DAILY.

OR

2. Commercial or food grade sanitizer that is EPA approved

FOLLOW MANUFACTURER'S DIRECTIONS.

3. Dispose of tissues and diapers properly.
4. Treatment: None.

For more information, you or your physician may call the Central District Health Department at 385-5175, or call your local health department.